

Universal Design in School Competitions

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Abstract. This paper investigates to what degree universal design is assessed in architectural school competitions in Norway.

Keywords. Universal Design, Architecture Competition, School

Introduction

In this study we will look at the role of universal design in public architectural competitions for schools buildings in Norway. The architectural competition is an instrument for a client to obtain a high quality project. The architectural design competition plays an important role for most architectural firms – this is how they get work. Architectural values evolve over time over time [1-4]. Therefore also the evaluation criteria evolve over time [2]. Recent Swedish studies of which design criteria are used when assessing competitions show no traces of universal design as an independent design criterion [5-7].

1. Method

The objective for this study is to investigate to what degree universal design plays a role in Norwegian school competitions. The study is based on the competition briefs and the written evaluations of the juries from 10 school competitions in Norway [8]. One competition was held in 2009, five in 2010 and four in 2011. The total number of designs is 44, proposed by 28 different architectural offices. This study examines; 1) The competition briefs with focus on universal design requirements; 2) The competitions' different assessment criteria formulated by the clients prior to the execution of the competitions; 3) How the projects were judged in relation to universal design based on the jury reports.

2. Results

Universal design is a requirement in the competition brief in eight of nine of the cases. In five cases universal design is clearly addressed with its own headline. The jury comments the subject universal design in six of nine cases. We can divide the juries'

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comments into two types of comments. Group one contains general comments like “all projects have universal design ability”. The jury has made an evaluation, but does not reveal what criteria have been used to reach this conclusion. In the second group of comments, the criteria are recognizable: In five of six cases the juries comment on distance. In four of six cases, the juries comment on overview/organization. In three of six cases the juries had opinions on the number and the positioning of elevators and discussed concerns related to staircases and levels. Universal design is never part of the juries’ final conclusions.

Table 1. Relation between the competition briefs, the competitions’ assessment criteria, and the juries evaluations related to universal design (UD=Universal Design)

| Competition no. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|--|---------|-------|--------|--------|---------|--------|-------|--------------|--------|--------------|
| UD in the competition brief | 107 w. | 36 w. | 136 w. | 14 w. | 148 w. | 122 w. | 27 w. | ² | 112 w. | 0 w. |
| UD as headline | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | | No | No |
| UD assessment criterion / number of criteria | Yes /14 | No/7 | No/6 | Yes/8 | Yes /11 | No/7 | No/6 | Yes /10 | Yes/6 | No/5 |
| The Jury’s comments related UD | 71w. | 0 w. | 0 w. | 234 w. | 73w. | 104 w. | 0 w. | 50 w. | 376 w. | ³ |
| UD mentioned in the final conclusion | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | |

3. Conclusion

The results show that, in general, public clients responsible for school buildings ask for universal designed buildings. However, this requirement should be part of the assessment criteria to secure that the jury actually evaluate this criteria.

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³ Not public